

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are all the claims pending in the application. Applicants have withdrawn claims 14-20 as being directed to a non-elected invention, but reserve the right to file a divisional on these non-elected claims

Applicants have amended the title to make the title more descriptive of the claimed invention. Further, Applicants have amended the Abstract to be consistent with the claimed invention. Finally, Applicants have amended the specification by adding the titles in the appropriate places.

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim the priority and receipt of the priority document. Further, it is noted that the Examiner has considered the Information Disclosure Statement filed concurrently with the application.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112:

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 (second paragraph) as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject invention. It is submitted that the above amendments to the claims overcomes this rejection

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102:

Claims 1-3, 7-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Drouart, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,522,077).

Claim Rejections 35 U.S.C. § 103:

Claims 4-6, and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Drouart, et al. alone or when taken in view of Mansfield (U.S. Patent No. 4,689,212).

For the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections.

Claim 1 has been amended to comply with U.S. practice and to incorporate the inventive feature of claim 13 which has been canceled. This means that the claimed invention is now directed to a specific location for introducing the reducing elements into the plasma torch. In this context, Applicants invite the Examiner to focus on Figures 7-9, wherein a second feed module 9B feeds one or more reducing elements to the interaction zone 8 via an injector 15.

Drouart et al. fails to teach such a specific location of introducing at least one reducing element. Drouart et al. provides a method of building up an optical fiber preform by using plasma deposition, the method involving depositing build-up silica on the primary preform to be built up by means of a plasma torch, the method further involving injecting hydroxyl ions in controlled manner into said build-up silica so as to obtain an average hydroxyl ion concentration lying in the range 50 parts per million (ppm) to 100 ppm in the built-up silica deposited on said primary preform.

In order to obtain a specific concentration of OH-ions control is performed to regulate the amount of water vapor entrained by the plasma generating gas that is received in the plasma torch to obtain an average of about 100 ppm of hydroxyl ions trapped in the silica that is deposited on the primary preform. Instead of humidifying the plasma-generating gas, hydroxyl ions can be incorporated into the silica built up by means of the plasma by feeding hydrogen to the plasma torch or from hydrocarbons trapped up by the plasma generating gas (*See*, column 5, lines 4-11).

Drouart et al. does not teach or suggest applying a specific location for introducing at least one of said reducing elements into an introduction zone. In addition, Drouart et al. does not show any relationship regarding the reduction of the nitrogen oxides generated by the interaction between the oxygen and the nitrogen contained in the enclosure due to the high temperatures of

the plasma generated by the torch. Therefore, the person skilled in the art confronted with the technical problem underlying the present invention, would not find any hint or pointer in Drouart et al. that the generation of nitrogen oxides can be reduced by reducing elements like hydrogen or ammonia (*See*, paragraph [0036]). Therefore, Applicants submit that the additional information in claim 1, i.e. "... introducing a reducing element into the interaction zone, the reducing element reacting to induce reduction of the nitrogen oxides produced by interaction between nitrogen and oxygen in the presence of the plasma generated by the torch " cannot be found in Drouart et al..

On basis of the above, Applicants submit that the claims patentably distinguish over the prior art

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: January 29, 2008